

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 2185

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GAGS PINT, CO

SUBJ: LIBERAL PARTY TROUBLES

REF BOGOTA 2114

1. SUMMARY. PRES LOPEZ' APPOINTMENT OF NEW GOVERNORS HAS BEEN GENERALLY

INTERPRETED AS A MOVE TO UNIFY THE LIBERAL PARTY, ON THE EVE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF CONGRESS. HOWEVER SOME LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE CONGRESSMEN ARE SKEPTICAL OF LOPEZ' MOTIVES PARTICULARLY BECAUSE MANY LIBERAL PARTY CONGRESSMEN WANT A LIBERAL TO REPLACE THE CURRENT COMPTROLLER GEN WHO IS ALSO A LIBERAL, WHILE LOPEZ HAS COMMITTED HIMSELF AND THE PARTY TO A CONSERVATIVE. THESE INTERNAL LIBERAL PARTY DIFFERENCES INDICATE GROWING DIVISIVENESS IN THE LIBERAL PARTY END SUMMARY.

2. PRES LOPEZ' DECISION TO NAME NEW GOVERNOR IN SEVERAL DEPTS HAS BEEN INTERPRETED BY SEVERAL POLIT OBSERVERS AS AN EFFORT, IN PART TO PURCHASE LIBERAL PARTY UNITY DURING THE EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF CONGRESS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN MAR 11. A BILL TO REFORM THE OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER GEN, WHICH IS TO BE CONSIDERED DURING THE EXTRAORDINARY SESSION, RAN INTO UNEXPECTED DIFFICULTY DURING THE ORDINARY SESSION OF CONGRESS LAST DEC WHEN SEVERAL LIBERAL CONGRESSMEN DECIDED TO TIE THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE BILL TO THE NAMING OF A LIBERAL TO REPLACE THE PRESENT COMPTROLLERGEN, CONFIDENTIAL

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JULIO E ESCALLON WHO IS ALSO A LIBERAL. DURING THE ELECTION

CAMPAIGN AND IN A RECENT ADDRESS TO THE NATION PRES LOPEZ COMMITTED HIMSELF AND THE LIBERAL PARTY, AT LEAST TO THE EXTENT OF HIS INFLUENCE IN THE CONGRESS, TO NAMING A CONSERVATIVE TO THE POSITION. THE COMPTROLLERGEN IS NORMALLY APPOINTED BY THE CHAMBER OF REPS. (DURING THE NATIONAL FRONT GOVTS, THE COMPTROLLERGEN AND ALNORGEN WERE ALWAYS FROM THE OPPOSITE PARTY OF THE PRES). RATHER THAN TO CONFRONT THE PRES DIRECTLY IN DEC, THE CHAMBER OF REPS BURIED THE BILL IN COMMITTEE.

3. PRIOR TO CALLING THE EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF CONGRESS PRES LOPEZ APPARENTLY WITHOUT SUCCESS PRIVATELY AND PUBLICLY ATTEMPTED TO CONVINCE THE CONGRESS TO CONCERN ITSELF INITIALLY ONLY WITH THE REFORM BILL AND TO LEAVE THE NAMING OF THE NEW COMPTROLLEGGEN FOR THE REGULAR SESSION BEGINNING IN JULY. MEANWHILE THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE COMPTROLLER GENERALSHIP DEEPENED WHEN ALLEGED SCANDALS INVOLVING ESCALLON AND HIS STEWARDSHIP OF THE OFFICE WERE REVEALED. THE NAMING OF NEW GOVERNORS HAS BEEN SEEN, THEREFORE AS AN ATTEMPT BY LOPEZ TO ASSUAGE KEY LIBERAL CONGRESSMEN BY NAMING NEW GOVERNORS IN DEPTS WHERE THERE HAD BEEN INTRA-PARTY FRICTION, HOPING THEREBY TO OBTAIN PARTY UNITY DURING THE EXTRA SESSION OF CONGRESS. (FOR FURTHER BACKGROUND TO THE APPOINTMENT OF THE NEW GOVERNORS, SEE REFTEL).

4. SOME LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE CONGRESSMEN HOWEVER VIEW LOPEZ' ACTIVITIES WITH A GOOD DEAL OF SKEPTICISM. THEY POINT OUT THAT THREE LIBERAL FACTIONS HAVE DEVELOPED IN THE CONGRESS OVER THE COMPTROLLER ISSUE: "LOPISTAS PUROS" WHO SUPPORT THE LOPEZ THESIS OF A CONSERVATIVE COMPTROLLER, LOPISTAS WHO WANT A LIBERAL COMPTROLLER AND ANTI-LOPISTAS (TURBAYISTAS AND LLERISTAS) WHO ALSO WANT A LIBERAL COMPTROLLER.

THE LATTER TWO GROUPS ARE FAR LARGER THAN KM PURISTS BUT THESE SOURCES ALSO CLAIM THAT LOPEZ COULD HAVE HAD HIS WAY HAD HE GIVEN EARLY SUPPORT TO A CANDIDATEO ESCALLGR#

ZJEZHPD# HAS BEEN
N LLERISTA#AND MORE RECENTLY A TURBAYISTA. HIS INVOLVEMENT IN ALLEGED SCANDALS, PARTICULARLY PROVEN TRUE - AS EMB SOURCES DEEM LIKELY - WOULD TARNISH THE IMAGES OF FORMER PRES CARLOS LLERAS RESTREPO AND CURRENT SENATE PRES JULIO CESAR TURBAY,
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AND THEREFORE STRENGTHEN LOPISTA ELEMENTS IN THE PARTY.

5. WHATEVER THE PRES'S MOTIVES, LIBERAL BICKERING SEEMS TO BE ON THE UPSWING, WITH AS YET UNPREDICTABLE RESULTS. ACCORDING TO CONSERVATIVE PARTY SOURCES, THE CONSERVATIVES WILL CONTINUE THEIR POLICY OF COOPERATION WITH LOPEZ WHEREVER POSSIBLE, AND RESTRAINED OPPOSITION OTHERWISE, WHILE THE LIBERAL FACTIONS, ENTLY WILL NOT EVEN PROTEST THE APPOINTMENT OF A LIBERAL COMPTROLLER

GEN SHOULD THAT BE THE CASE. VAKY

THEY HOPE, ENGAGE IN DIVISIVE POLITICS. THE CONSERVATIVES APPAR-
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